

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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**LANDOWNERS: REQUEST HABITAT CHECK-OFF WHEN
BUYING SEED FOR CRP**

LEWIS – Landowners preparing to purchase grass and forb seed mixtures for land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can increase their positive impact on Iowa wildlife by enrolling in the Habitat Check-off.

The Habitat Check-off, which costs nothing to the landowner, is a partnership between the Iowa Seed Growers Association, Pheasants Forever (PF) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that shares credits from seed purchased from local seed dealers.

When a landowner purchases seed from a member of the Iowa Seed Growers Association, the dealer will provide credit of 10 percent of the total purchase to a fund shared by the DNR and PF. The DNR and PF use the credits by to purchase additional seed for habitat improvement projects.

“The DNR will use those credits to put additional native grasses right back on the land to either improve existing CRP or to develop new habitat on private land,” said Angi Bruce, supervisor for the Iowa DNR’s wildlife bureau in southwest Iowa. “The Habitat Check-off program is really a win-win for upland game and water quality in the state. The best part of the program is, it costs nothing for landowners to participate. All they have to do is to ask for the Habitat Check-off form.

“With all the new land enrolled in CRP, we are hopeful the high quality prairie seed mix available from local seed growers will benefit upland wildlife species,” Bruce said. “Locally grown native seed is more desired because it is best suited for Iowa’s climate and soils.”

Landowners wanting more information on the Habitat Check-off can contact their local wildlife biologist available on the Iowa DNR's website at www.iowadnr.com. Click on the Wildlife link, then the private lands management link for a list of the local contacts.

For more information, contact Bruce at 712-769-2587.

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STATE FORESTRY STILL NEEDS SEEDS

Des Moines - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) forestry bureau is in need of certain types of acorns for use at its state forest nursery and is looking for help from Iowans.

The DNR is willing to purchase Swamp White Oak acorns for \$50 per bushel, Chinkapin Oak acorns for \$30 per bushel, Green Ash seed for \$10 per bushel, Shellbark Hickory for \$10 to \$20 per bushel, and Shagbark Hickory for \$5 to \$10 per bushel.

"Although it has been a good year for most native tree seeds, we need these specific tree seeds for our nursery operations," said John Walkowiak, chief of the DNR's forestry bureau.

The majority of the seed is collected and purchased in the fall and planted right away for spring germination. The State Forest Nursery grows 1-3 year old native trees and shrubs and sells them at cost for reforestation programs.

Walkowiak said if someone has access to any of the needed types of seed, they should contact the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 or their state forest office to arrange for delivery.

He also suggested if someone is thinking about conservation planting this spring, they should check out the forestry website at www.iowadnr.com/forestry. There is information on the website for people to learn where to purchase native trees and shrubs and where to get assistance in deciding where and what to plant through the DNR's district foresters.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966.

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DUCK HUNTERS WATCHING THE SKY

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Hoping for cold and a northwest wind, Iowa duck hunters have their eyes on the sky.

A dry summer and fall didn't do much to fill their favorite marshes. Warm weather hadn't pushed many birds south, either. Now, with a couple inches of rain and cold weather blowing in, hunters are crossing their fingers, and making plans to call in sick to work.

"We had a lot of hunters out here Saturday--11 boats at just one ramp--but I didn't hear many shots," notes Dennis Proctor, manager of the Department of Natural Resources' Hawkeye Wildlife Area near Swisher. "Then, on Sunday, there wasn't near the traffic. That tells me there weren't many ducks, yet. Usually, when hunters are getting into ducks, word spreads and they tell their buddies."

With two inches of rain, though, from Saturday through Monday, water conditions have improved. "We needed that rain. We have nice vegetation; lots of smartweed and Spanish needle throughout the area," reminds Proctor. "The rain put some water into those impoundments and potholes." And a cold front blowing in from the northwest should deliver the ducks. The results were beginning to show. Even with an east wind and light showers, a couple neighbors limited out on mallards Monday.

In north central Iowa, ring-necks, lesser scaup and some redheads and canvasbacks are winging in. "We had a tremendous push of diving ducks over the weekend," passes along DNR information specialist Lowell Washburn, from Clear Lake. "They're heading to the bigger waters. That's all that's left, anyway, given the dry conditions." Washburn says hunting pressure—and success rates—have been light, heading into the end of the week. "Duck hunters in Iowa are dependent on the whims of the weather," he admits. "A lot of mallards have been staying west of here over the past few years. I don't know if it's changing agricultural patterns or what. We're going to have to have some good northwest winds, to go along with the forecast lows in the teens in Canada to push them in this direction."

On the Mississippi River, hunter numbers should pick up in a hurry. "We saw moderate to low hunter pressure through last week. Then, the weather changed and we had a good migration day through Saturday. Hunter numbers picked up on the weekend," notes Randy Robinson, from the DNR's Green Island wildlife area, north of Sabula. "But we also had three inches of rain (through Monday). Hunter interest should skyrocket by *this* weekend." Robinson says 2,400 acres of the 3,800-acre management area are under water, helped along as the rain flooded the East Pool. Robinson has been seeing mostly mallards on the Mississippi backwaters, with a few ring-necks and pintails. With cold and wind heading at us, he sees hunter success climbing. "We'll be picking up birds then. The lucky hunters will be shooting some of them."

Way out west, waterfowl numbers are climbing. “It was pitiful last week. Hunters knew there were no ducks flying,” recalls DNR wildlife biologist Carl Priebe, in the Riverton area. “We had a big push start late Friday, through Monday. I was watching several groups of ducks working fields (Monday) morning.”

From here, it’s up to the wind, the weather...and how well you’ve set your decoy spread.

Up To Date Duck Numbers

Duck hunters can stay up to date with migration information by clicking through the Department of Natural Resources website. Al Hancock, from the DNR’s Clear Lake station, tracks of weekly waterfowl surveys, reported by the DNR’s 22 multi-county wildlife units. Updated information is posted by about noon each Friday. “We had 500 hits last Saturday, and just under 500 the day before,” notes Hancock. “We urge you, though, to compare the week to week totals, rather worry about the exact number listed. It is an index.”

To find the survey, go to the DNR website: www.iowadnr.com, click on ‘hunting information’ (left column), then ‘waterfowl’, then ‘migration information’, then ‘Biweekly Fall Waterfowl Survey’ (it is *weekly*, though). The web page also contains links to habitat conditions and waterfowl counts from other states.

Antlerless Tags Remain

Heading into the busiest periods of Iowa’s deer seasons, there are plenty of ‘county antlerless’ tags remaining. Each county was assigned an allotment of licenses for antlerless deer—in addition to regular ‘any sex’ tags--to reduce the doe population statewide. As of Oct. 29, the tags had been sold out in 27 counties. Those were generally counties in which smaller allotments of 100 or 150 tags were available. However, several higher allotment counties (Warren, Story, Marshall, and Woodbury) have hit their limits, too.

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